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ABSTRACT

Although the ultimate purpose of faculty evaluation should be improvement of instruction, it appears that most evaluation systems criticize or reject rather than attain better teaching performance. The evaluation instrument in the Department of Media Communication Science at Trenton State College has been lacking in certain evaluative criteria in both peer and student assessment. This study surveyed other departments in the institution, faculty, and students for new guidelines to help assess instructor performance for the purpose of retention, promotion, and tenure. Recommendations included a written statement by department chairperson and faculty for peer evaluation rather than an actual rating form, as well as a new set of standards for student evaluation of instruction. (Author/LBH)

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ABSTRACT

Development of New Evaluation Instruments for Faculty Promotion and Retention in the Department of Media Communication Science at Trenton State College

The ultimate purpose of faculty evaluation should be improvement of instruction. It appears, however, that most evaluation systems work in the opposite direction, and criticize or reject rather than attain better teaching performance. The evaluation instrument in the Department of Media Communication Science at Trenton State College has been lacking in certain evaluative criteria in both peer and student assessment. This study surveyed other departments in the institution, faculty, and students for new guidelines to help assess instructor performance for the purpose of retention, promotion and tenure. Recommendations included a written statement by department chairperson and faculty for peer evaluation rather than an actual rating form; and a new set of standards for student evaluation of instruction.

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DEVELOPMENT OF NEW EVALUATION INSTRUMENTS FOR FACULTY PROMOTION AND RETENTION IN THE DEPARTMENT OF MEDIA COMMUNICATION SCIENCE AT TRENTON STATE COLLEGE

COLLEGE GOVERNANCE

by

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EASTERN PENNSYLVANIA II

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I. INTRODUCTION

Prompted by the current debate over tenure, the spread of teacher's unions, and the concern of legislators for providing a uniform teaching load in institutions of public higher education, there seems to be great interest in the whole area of faculty evaluation, as well as in the improvement of college and university teaching. The central purpose of evaluation should be to help a person improve his performance, whether that person is a student or a teacher. It appears, however, that most evaluation systems work primarily to reject people rather than to help them attain better performance. The effect of the evaluation really depends on the actual instrument used for evaluation.

A. THE PROBLEM

At the present time, the Department of Media Communication Science at Trenton State College is using two forms for faculty evaluation. One form is given to the students, generally near the end of the semester or at reappointment or promotion time which could be at different points in the semester. The second form is a peer evaluation given to the other members of the department's faculty at reappointment or promotion time.

The faculty/peer evaluation is a new form and the student evaluation is the second of its kind. The first student form was found to be too long and detailed, and the points for dis-

cussion vague in relation to a pertinent evaluation. The new student evaluation form is more concise but lacking in hard core judgments. Furthermore, since few students are trained in the design of objective and useful evaluation it becomes an end of the year duty instead of providing information to instructors concerning their courses and teaching.

The faculty/peer evaluation calls for a rating on different levels of competence. Again the points for discussion are vague and only truly applicable if the evaluator is very familiar with the accomplishments and teaching abilities of the faculty member being evaluated. It also calls for information gathered in classroom visits and observations. Therefore, the major concern of this study will be to closely examine the student and faculty evaluation and make recommendations to change these forms to a more efficient and effective evaluation for use in the Department of Media Communication Science.

B. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

An examination of the literature showed that annual faculty performance reviews were required at many institutions. Included in the literature was evidence that systematized student evaluations were administered but meaningful evaluation of teaching performance of faculty members in both cases were rare, since the methods employed to assess teaching effectiveness were frequently inaccurate and unrealiable.

Studies by Kinsel (7), (8), Menzie (10), and Centra (3), find it necessary to have ratings of overall performance as well as teaching performance. Factors discussed were principally concerned with their institutions in evaluating the performance of a faculty member. These studies offer important suggestions for various methods and approaches to assess performance.

Several different studies were conducted in the area of factors influencing evaluations. Oles (11) sites that the time of evaluation is critical--whether it is given at the beginning or the end of the semester makes a substantial difference. Yongkittkul (13), however, states that the time of day at which the class meets does not appreciable effect the instructor on course ratings. Aleamoni (1) studies indicated that if the reason for evaluation is given (i.e. promotion, retention, reappointment), the results of the evaluation is changed.

Recent studies show that evaluations should make some significant impact on the instructor and as a result, on their students. Studies by Geisert (5), Hind (6), Lunney (9), and Vogt (12) offer valuable insight to the outcome of student and faculty evaluation.

II. PROCEDURES

In order to make an objective study, both faculty and student evaluation forms and procedures were gathered from different departments of the college. A total of fourteen departments in the School of Arts and Sciences and the School of Education were collected.

Only three departments used a faculty or peer evaluation form for promotion or tenure. Many of the departments use only a written evaluation of a candidate after classroom observation by the department chairperson and no official form is available. Other departments make a collective statement from observations made by other faculty members about the candidate. The number of observations in each department varied from one to three.

In every case, student evaluations of an instructor were available in every department. College policy requires student evaluation of instructors for promotion, retention and tenure, and are somewhat ignored at other times. All departments reporting has an official, anonymous course evaluation. Forms may be distributed at any time during the semester and varied in length from one to five pages, with the one page form the most prevalent.

Areas covered in the student evaluation of an instructor ranged from objectivity, preparation, fairness in grading, arousing interest, mastery of the subject, impartiality, assignments, stimulation of discussion, and other similar

areas or points. Several departments use the same form that has been in use for the past ten years or so without change. Other departments have made modifications on that basic form but all the points discussed are similar.

Some of the student assessments of teaching effectiveness use a rating system of one to five or (a) to (e). The newer forms use a response sheet of making a choice from: strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, strongly disagree and not applicable. One survey asked for brief statements on a particular point instead of providing responses.

The faculty members of the Department of Media Communication Science were shown and questioned on the effectiveness of the various evaluation instruments. Discussion compared the different competencies and wording used on the evaluations.

Students in seven classes were given departmental evaluation forms to complete at the end of the semester. After completion, the students were given an identical blank form and were asked to analyze the different points and areas covered. They were asked to discuss and offer suggestions on the following questions:

1. Is this an appropriate evaluation form?
2. What does not apply?
3. What wording is vague or redundant?
4. What areas are missing? Should be added?
5. Should the rating system remain the same?
6. Is it too specific?

The students were then asked of their experience with other departments at the college and their evaluation form. The students were shown examples of other departments and discussion centered on improvement of a new instrument of evaluation.

III. RESULTS

Although the primary responsibility for the evaluation and improvement of faculty teaching resides with the chairperson, most of the departments report that their faculties are evaluated by both chairperson and a committee of tenured peers. These observations and evaluations are analyzed and discussed by the instructors and the chairperson.

Classroom teaching is more important today and is considered a major factor in overall faculty evaluations in virtually all colleges. A faculty member's principal responsibility is that of teaching students. Consequently it is imperative that evidence be collected as accurately and objectively as possible in evaluation of teaching performance.

College policy states that a candidate for reappointment, tenure or promotion must be observed and evaluated in the classroom and in other situations. This observation should be carried out by the department chairperson and at least two other faculty in the department during each appointive year.

Along with other factors these following areas are basic discussions for all of the departments:

1. Knowledge of subject
2. Ability to present subject matter effectively
3. Evidence of preparation and organization
4. Sensitivity/rapport with students
5. Self awareness and limitations

All other areas were irrelevant or redundant with these five points always outstanding. These levels of competencies are more concrete and easier to evaluate. Faculty find it difficult to evaluate because they are not qualified to judge the effect on the students because they are observers and not participants in the classroom. It is also difficult to rate on a scale of one to five or (a) to (e), a candidate's knowledge or mastery on that one particular day.

It is obvious that this is the case since a majority of the departments in the college do not use an official evaluation instrument. These departments usually compose a letter consisting of paragraphs of overall abilities and performance by each faculty peer. It is easier to comment on actions and observations rather than vague or redundant points on an evaluation form.

All of these prepared forms have many areas that are lacking and that should be discussed for reappointment, tenure or promotion.

Some of the neglected areas are:

1. Scholarly achievement
2. Personal attributes
3. Service to the department/college/discipline outside the college
4. Self-evaluation
5. Research/publication
6. Student advising
7. Campus committee work

These points should be included in an evaluation and could be stated in paragraph form giving basic information rather than using a rating system. Ultimately these letters should be shown to the candidate for reaction and a signature.

In the area of student evaluation of an instructor, all departments surveyed use a formal procedure for appraising faculty performance. College policy requires an unsigned evaluation at least once by the students in every section (class) he teaches in each semester.

Each department developed or adopted its own evaluation instrument. All forms are required to include at least the following items:

1. Ability to present subject matter and/or develop performance skills
2. Organization of class material
3. Sensitivity to student feelings and problems
4. Fairness in dealing with students
5. Interest in subject
6. Responsiveness to student ideas, questions and discussions

It is desirable to have more than one evaluation in each section during the semester, but if only one is made, it should not be given at the time of final examinations.

The faculty member may elect to share his student evaluations (all of them, not a selection) with the chairperson or the appropriate departmental committee. Though it is his preference to keep the student's evaluations for his own personal use, he should be advised that the student's ratings are a significant part of the departmental recommendation concerning his work.

In some departments, student committees are used to provide student input during the time when a decision has to be made.

Informal student feedback to department chairpersons on faculty is sometimes helpful in making a decision, but a sincere effort should be made to permit a faculty member to respond to adverse student feedback.

Very often student course selection is indicative of the popularity of an instructor. In certain circumstances, student enrollment in a particular course is so overwhelming that it must be closed out or split into two classes. This is an important factor in assessing an instructor's ability to teach and perform.

Students who were questioned on the validity of the present evaluation instrument made several statements for its improvement. Most students agreed that the type of question on a form depends on the subject. Item 9 (see Appendix II) on the form asks about effective use of class time. Respondents indicated the subject or the specific

course made a difference in this answer. Item 9 and Item 3 were stated to be redundant because organization and class time are so similar.

On Item 2, students wanted to know the meaning of competency. Again this statement was rated as redundant because it was really saying "ability to develop student ability" which corresponded closely with Item 8.

Some students believed that this type of evaluation was really comparing the instructor to other instructors, not assessing performance. The actual form itself was questioned because it forced or provided answers by checking off blocks, not really analyzing each statement. It was strongly suggested that the procedure used in some of the other departments should be employed in this case. Some departments use retorts like agree, strongly agree, disagree, strongly disagree, no opinion, or not applicable in reply to a statement.

Other reactions approved the two evaluative statements about teaching abilities and felt that they could make a better contribution here rather on the above arrangement. They also approved of adding to the questions, "How do you rate this course in relation to other courses taken?" (disregarding the instructor); "How do you rate this instructor in relation to other instructors taken?" (disregarding the course); and "Would you recommend this course to others?"

The students also noted the absence of other areas they felt should be included in an evaluation:

1. Currentness and relevancy of textbook
2. Kind and purpose of assignments
3. Difficulty and frequency of tests
4. Personal attributes
5. Non-threatening atmosphere
6. Ability and attitudes outside the classroom

Some students believed that the forms for evaluation should be distributed, monitored and collected by students and not to be read by the instructor until the final course marks were submitted. This suggestion was changed when other students agreed that an evaluation should be so written for the specific purpose of improving instruction, not for criticizing the instructor, thus threatening grades. Many students as well as faculty believe that instructor evaluation could be a threat to academic freedom and could be used as a threat as well as a reward system.

IV. DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

All evaluations and appraisals again are dependent on the question of how qualified is any person, whether an administrator, peer or student to judge another. Few are properly trained to assess and criticize teaching ability yet the system of rating continues, and great weight is placed on these judgments. So even colleagues, supervisors and students do allow personal prejudices and tastes to influence an estimation of one's ability to teach or perform.

The ultimate purpose of instructor evaluation has always been for the improvement of teaching. It is questioned if all these ratings, forms and suggestions are ever used to change teaching practices as a result of these findings. Perhaps, one recommendation would be for a program of self-evaluation. Instructors could evaluate themselves through video-taping sessions, tape recordings of lectures, degree and quality of student's participation and a serious analysis of student evaluations.

However, faculty and student evaluation in this institution has been used for the purpose of retention and tenure, not specifically for improvement of instruction. Therefore some means of rating and assessing must still be carried out. Since the present evaluation instrument for peer evaluation is insufficient, it is recommended that a policy of a written appraisal be adopted and the old instrument be eliminated. (See Appendix I) This procedure on the whole seems to be the most worthwhile, though the informal assess-

ment's value is undocumented and therefore open to criticism. It is, however, the one avenue that is favored by most.

It is also recommended that this appraisal likewise include a guideline to assist in the evaluation process. This would not include any information required by the institution on overall performance (i.e. service to the college, service to the discipline outside the college, research, committee work, etc.) but primarily on teaching ability and areas relating to the department.

The following is a list of possible criteria to include when writing an evaluation:

1. Mastery and interest in subject
2. Awareness of abilities and limitations
3. Thorough preparation and organization
4. Professional responsibility
5. Use of effective innovation in the learning process
6. Productivity, number of preparations, development of new courses
7. Effectiveness in advising students
8. Analysis of student evaluation forms

One question that should be included in this procedure should also be answered. "If this is not the first observation, would you say that the candidate has improved, has remained the same, or is worse in his teaching?"

When completed, the entire appraisal should be given to the candidate for reaction and a signature.

The aim of student evaluation of instruction is to convey to the instructor the student's impressions of the instructional processes. These appraisals have the potentiality of producing a great deal of benefit for the instructors and the students, since the instructor will have, in addition to their regular examinations, the students' reactions to their courses. In general, students want evaluations to provide information to instructors concerning their courses and teaching ability.

Question analysis of the evaluation procedure suggests that the students access their courses according to three areas. These are (a) the instructor's attitudes and abilities inside of the classroom (b) the student's own efforts in the course including such things as attendance, time and effort expended in study, etc., and (c) the outside factors of the courses such as reading assignments, textbooks and papers.

The students reported that the most respected instructors were those who taught toward their objectives that were clearly outlined at the onset of the course, and those who used relevant materials and were always in command of their classes.

It is therefore recommended that the present evaluation instrumented (see Appendix II) be replaced with a new instrument that should elicit direct responses from the student rather than a forced or patterned response by checking off a square or blank.

It should be indicated to the student that his name should not appear on the form and that it will be collected by a student in class and precautions will be taken so that the respondent cannot be identified. The student should also be

made aware that the instructor is administrating this evaluation so he can assess the effectiveness of this teaching and to determine how he might increase that effectiveness; and that it can be reliable and worthwhile only if the student is sincere and the statements made without consulting classmates.

The student assessment of teaching effectiveness should include the following statements with appropriate space for responses.

1. To what extent do you think the instructor has helped you understand the material of the course?
2. How interested were you in this subject before you enrolled in this course and has the instructor increased your interest.
3. How much do you think the instructor's lectures have contributed to your understanding of material and were they clearly presented?
4. How well was the organization and planning of class materials handled, and were there a variety of teaching techniques used?
5. Was the instructor impartial in the treatment of individuals in the class?
6. Were the assignments of appropriate length and scope? Was a textbook used and what was its relevancy?
7. Were the assignments and test grades sufficient to fairly determine a final grade?
8. To what extent was the instructor available for answering questions and conferences outside the classroom?

9. Did you find a non-threatening atmosphere in the classroom?

10. How would you rate this course in relation to other courses taken? (disregarding the instructor)

11. How would you rate this instructor in relation to other instructors taken? (disregarding the course)

12. Would you recommend this course to others?

The student is encouraged to make any further comments, specific or general, giving unusual strengths or weaknesses.

DEPARTMENT OF MEDIA COMMUNICATION SCIENCE
TRENTON STATE COLLEGE

FACULTY EVALUATION FORM

Behavior Exhibited	Level of Competence					Evidence Obtained From			
	None	Low	Aver.	High	Out standing	C.O.	O.S.	P.S.	S.S.
Subject Mastery									
Continuous Growth									
Awareness of Abilities									
Awareness of Limitations									
Adaptability									
Thorough Preparation									
Rapport with Students									
Scholarly Achievement									
Participation in Activities									
Professional Responsibility									
Totals									

Comments and Signature of Evaluator _____

_____

_____

_____

Reaction and Signature of Faculty Member _____

_____

_____

_____

Key: C.O.- Classroom Observation O.S. - Other Situation
P.S. - Primary Source S.S. - Secondary Source

DEPARTMENT OF MEDIA COMMUNICATION SCIENCE
TRENTON STATE COLLEGE

STUDENT EVALUATION FORM

Behavior Exhibited by _____ Date _____

In _____

	Level of Competence				
	0 None	1 Low	2 Average	3 High	4 Out standing
Ability to present subject matter					
Ability to develop student competency					
Organization of class materials					
Sensitivity to students feelings					
Fairness in dealings with students					
Interest in subject					
Responsiveness to student ideas					
Helps student produce to capacity					
Effective use of class time					
Uses variety of teaching techniques					
Totals					

1. Is there something that you think the instructor has done especially well in the teaching of this course? Be specific.

2. What do you think might be done to improve the teaching of this course? Be specific.

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DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION
OREGON STATE COLLEGE

STUDENT EVALUATION FORM

Instructor Evaluated ____ Date ____

Course: ____

1. To what extent do you think the instructor has helped you understand the material of the course?

2. How interested were you in this subject before you enrolled in this course and has the instructor increased your interest?

3. How much do you think the instructor's lectures have contributed to your understanding of material and were they clearly presented?

4. How well was the organization and planning of class materials handled, and were there a variety of teaching techniques used?

5. Was the instructor impartial in the treatment of individuals in the class?

6. Were the assignments of appropriate length and scope? Was a textbook used and what was its relevancy?

7. Were the assignments and test grades sufficient to fairly determine a final grade?

8. To what extent was the instructor available for answering questions and conferences outside the classroom?

9. Did you find a non-threatening atmosphere in the classroom?

10. How would you rate this course in relation to other courses taken?

11. How would you rate this instructor in relation to other instructors taken? (disregarding the course)

12. Would you recommend this course to others?